

STRUTS and CLUBS



Joining a Strut not only means that you can share your passion for flying with other pilots, but also help to pass on an interest in aviation to youngsters (left)

Becoming a member of an LAA regional group, or Strut, can offer new flying opportunities, great friendships and a wealth of knowledge to draw from. And with Struts throughout the UK, there's never been a better time to get involved.

Some years after the Association was formed in 1946, a number of members living in Sussex decided that it would be a benefit to members if they met as a local group once a month, and thus the very first regional group was formed. Formally recognised by the Association, the idea of regional groups was promoted nationwide, the name Strut being applied to them because they were supporting local members as well as the Association itself. The Southern Strut, as that first group was called, continues to this day, meeting on the first Wednesday of the month at Shoreham Airport.

Today, there are 28 Struts dotted around the UK, from Devon in the South-West to the Highlands & Islands Strut in the very north of Scotland. In recent times, there has been a move by some away from the word Strut because they feel it is somewhat old-fashioned, but all but four have retained what is now a rather nostalgic term, and part of the Association's history. It's true to say that no two Struts are the same; Devon for instance is a very large and active group of over 200 members, whilst Bedford & Chilton is a more informal group of perhaps a couple of dozen people. What they all do is meet on a monthly

Brian Hope explains how you can visit or join one of the LAA's regional groups, each with its own local flavour and wealth of friendship and knowledge

basis either to listen to an interesting speaker, or simply to catch up with old friends for a pint and a natter about aeroplanes. Some do suspend monthly meetings during the summer though, so if you intend visiting a Strut it is best to call the co-ordinator first to ensure they do in fact have a meeting scheduled.

The larger Struts are generally more active and organise fly-ins and fly-outs, assist in youth activities like Scout Aviation Camps, and hold social activities such as visits to museums, Christmas parties, etc. Some also help the Association at major events; Andover for example runs the campsite and car park at the Rally, and for 2012, the Wiltshire Flyers will be organising and manning the new Homebuilder Centre at the Rally.

One major attribute of every Strut is the wealth of knowledge and advice available from its members. Any member new to the Association who is thinking of building or buying an LAA aircraft can do no better than seek the advice of those who have gone

before, and local Strut members will be able to answer all those niggling questions. They will almost certainly also know where you can get awkward jobs carried out locally and even who might have some hangar space available.

The LAA also has a considerable number of the Type Clubs as affiliate members. These clubs have expertise in specific aircraft types and often arrange flying activities that are open to all flyers, not just their own members.

Five times a year, representatives from the Struts and Type Clubs meet with the LAA directors at Turweston HQ in what is known as the National Council. This body, which is currently undergoing a change in emphasis, has as its primary function progressing the interests of members, particularly in the 'fun' aspects of the Association, and generally working with the board to move the Association forward for the benefit of all. ◀

You can find details of your nearest Strut and a list of affiliated Type Clubs on the LAA website at www.laa.uk.com